

# The Changing Scene and the Unchanging Word

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"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."—Isa. 40:8.

## The Need of Regeneration



Dr. Machen

THIS article will appear at just about the time when very momentous events will be taking place in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Anything that it may say about the situation in that church may, therefore, at the time when THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN comes into the hands of its readers, seem to be out of date.

Yet at least one thing is already clear. It is that the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is profoundly corrupt. That fact would not be obscured in the slightest, in the eyes of any really well-informed observer, even by a decision of the General Assembly, in the pending judicial and administrative cases, against the 1934 General Assembly's Mandate and in favor of the members of the Independent Board and the Rev. John J. DeWaard and the Rev. Arthur F. Perkins.

It must be remembered that the 1934 Mandate is not only contrary to the Constitution of the church. It is also contrary to the contentions of the Modernists themselves, so far as the powers of the General Assembly are concerned. If the Modernists were in the slightest degree consistent, they would declare the 1934 Mandate unconstitutional and would put an abrupt quietus upon the subjection of candidates for the ministry to utterly unconstitutional questions as to their willingness to support the boards and agencies of the church.

But, you see, if the Modernists did come to such a decision, they would do so on quite different grounds from those which operate in the minds of people who are really true to the Bible and to our Standards. The Modernists would be insisting on

liberty in the interests of a freedom to undermine the authority of the Bible; people who are true to the Bible and to the Standards are insisting on that liberty in the interests of the Lordship of Jesus Christ as His commands are made known to us in God's holy Word.

The two positions would be poles apart, and the fact that liberty would be granted to the members of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions *on the Modernists' ground* would not in the slightest exhibit the soundness of the church; on the contrary, it would be only one more indication of the church's unsoundness.

As a matter of fact, it is extremely unlikely that the Modernists will attain to any such degree of consistency. Take as an example the Auburn Affirmationists in the Presbytery of Philadelphia. In the Auburn Affirmation these gentlemen protested loudly against what they regarded as a misuse of the power of the General Assembly. Yet now they are breathing out threatening and slaughter against those who appeal against the General Assembly to the Bible and the Constitution of the church. They are going to really extreme lengths to keep out of the ministry and out from the General Assembly those who will not promise a blanket allegiance to the General Assembly's shifting programs! Could anything be more utterly—I almost said more absurdly—inconsistent? So there is liberty in the church for those who undermine the Bible but none for those who believe it and live by it! Consistency is not one of the virtues of those who are now dominating the ecclesiastical machine.

My point is, however, that even if the Modernists now dominating the Permanent Judicial Commission—there are actually four Auburn Affirmationists among the seven ministerial members of that Commission—did muster up enough con-

sistency to give liberty in the church to those who honestly uphold the church's constitution as well as to those who undermine it, that would not in the slightest indicate that the church would be returning to orthodoxy.

It would still remain true that the machinery of the church is in control of the Modernists and their friends. It would still remain true that the church is exceedingly corrupt.

My own opinion is not only that the church is exceedingly corrupt but that it is *hopelessly* corrupt.

When I say that, I want to make perfectly clear what I mean. I do not mean that the reform of the church is beyond the power of the Spirit of God. On the contrary, the Spirit of God is all-powerful. He could, if He pleased, regenerate a million people in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in a year or in a month or in a single day. If that many people were regenerated in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the church could no doubt be reformed.

But what I mean by saying that the church is hopelessly corrupt is that the church cannot be reformed with the Christian resources *now in the church*.

We ought, it is true, to be very slow about trying to look into the heart of the individual man. We ought to be very slow to say: "This man or that man is certainly not a Christian, has certainly not been born again."

But when the state of the church is taken as a whole, it certainly can be said rather decidedly that great hosts of church-members give little credible evidence of having been born again. There must be regeneration as well as education if the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is to be reformed.